

Capital Planning Committee

Meeting Minutes

April 27, 2016

In attendance were:

Steve Andrew (by phone)
Charles Foskett
Diane Johnson
Anthony Lionetta
Mike Morse
Brian Rehrig
Barbara Thornton
Richard Viscay
Sandy Pooler

* Denotes those not in attendance

- **Community Preservation Committee Report:** CPC members were provided with a copy of the CPAC's 2016 Report. Charlie Foskett served as the CPC's liaison with this new committee. Charlie asked for a vote of the CPC supporting this report/plan. The CPA voted unanimously to support the CPAC 2017 Budget.
- **Debt Exclusion Votes:** It appears that the Debt Exclusion vote, scheduled for June 14, will have three items: 1) is a bundled vote for improvements at an Elementary School (Thompson) and at a Middle School, 2) is for the AHS Feasibility Study and, 3) is for the MM High School Rebuild. As specified by statute, the votes do not have dollars; the referendum is only to exclude the costs if the appropriating authority (Town Meeting) votes to bond them.

There was discussion about the CPC's position on these votes. Tony Lionetta questioned why the bundling, rather than giving voters the opportunity to democratically vote on the Thompson and the Middle School based on their own merits. Others raised the issue of why these items (schools) were going to a debt exclusion vote and not other items in the Capital budget. It was stressed that these items were not presented to the CPC during the normal course and rigors of planning and are newly identified needs.

Charlie Foskett framed the issue before the CPC as whether the CPC felt that these expenditures should be funded by the CP or whether debt exclusions were needed to fund them. While all agree that they could not be funded by the Capital Plan, there were concerns that the CPC's support of the debt exclusion approach to funding should not be taken as an indication that the CPC supports projects.

The CPC voted unanimously to support the debt exclusion as motioned, but with the added proviso that it not be taken as a vote supporting any or all of the projects.

- **Middle School Options:** Studies for both the Ottoson and the Gibbs were recently completed. Funding was split between the School Department and the FinCom. Copies of these reports were provided to the CPC earlier today and the results have yet to be presented to the School Department or the School Enrollment Task Force. Both these options appear to have similar capital cost implication as well as different operational and logistical consequences.

There was again discussion about what the CPC's position was on these two options. After much discussion, it was decided that the CPC should not offer an opinion in that the Board of Selectmen decided to set up a separate committee to address these specific issues. Sandy Pooler was asked to prepare an official position statement on this, which appears at the end of these minutes. It is anticipated that the School Enrollment Task Force will examine and vet all reasonable options for recommendation to the Finance Committee and Town Meeting.

The Town Bylaws establish the Capital Plan and a Capital Planning Committee that "shall be concerned with physical facilities such as land, buildings, or other structures, and pieces of equipment which require a relatively large investment and have a relatively long useful life." The Bylaw also states that "nothing in this Article shall be construed as preempting or diminishing the statutory prerogatives of the Town Manager or the Board of Selectmen. Two committees, the School Enrollment Task Force and the Minuteman Building Project Task Force have been charged with investigating and reporting on the Middle School, Thompson, Arlington High School enrollment issues and the Minuteman building issues. The Capital Planning Committee members believe those two task forces will make all necessary reports on those projects and therefore the Committee voted not to report on any of those projects.

- **Thompson School Expansion:** The estimated cost of this expansion is \$4,000,000 according to Diane Johnson. The School Department would fund the design cost, with the intent to later recover this cost from a Town Meeting appropriation. Tony Lionetta questioned whether this course of action would solve the longer term system wide needs. Diane Johnson stated that for the most part it would. A potential additional issue may be Hardy School at some point, if the Mugar site is developed.

Diane Johnson advised the CPC that the population of Thompson is limited to the District and the Buffer area (other than for certain special needs). Again it was unanimously decided by the CPC should not to offer a position on this project for the reasons noted previously.

- **Minuteman High School:** There was considerable concern expressed over the process taken and the high level of risk for Arlington associated with the proposed project. While the MM Task Force and the FinCom have voted to support the vote their support is contingent upon a successful debt exclusion vote. If Town Meeting votes for support for a contingent approval and the debt exclusion vote fails, then the Town Meeting vote become becomes a No Vote (or a Veto), according to both Bond Counsel and Town Counsel. The Committee discussed that there may be many reasons for concern ranging from a flawed process, replacing a building that is only 40 years old, a trend of dwindling school enrollment, other towns leaving the District, an oversized proposed school and the unreliability of operational costs and revenue.

The CPC voted 8 to 1 not to take a position on this project.

Capital Planning Committee Statement on four capital items.

The Town Bylaws establish the Capital Plan and a Capital Planning Committee. The Bylaw also states that “nothing in this Article shall be construed as preempting or diminishing the statutory prerogatives of the Town Manager or the Board of Selectmen. The Manager and the Selectmen established two task forces, the School Enrollment Task Force and the Minuteman Building Project Task Force, which have been charged with investigating and reporting on the Middle School, Thompson, Arlington High School enrollment issues and the Minuteman building issues. The Capital Planning Committee members believe those task forces will make all necessary reports on those projects and therefore the Committee voted not to report on those projects.

Adjournment